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DIET & NUTRITION IN GERMANY

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Think of the German diet and you bring to mind beer and bratwursts, sauerkraut and sausages. The typical diet in Germany is heavy, starchy and not exactly vegetarian-friendly. A variety of meats and meat products are usually included in every meal, while Germans indulge a national sweet tooth with baked goods and cakes.

MEAL STRUCTURE

According to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the German diet is typically structured according to the saying "breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, dine like a pauper." The typical German breakfast is large and hearty, featuring bread, cheese, cold meats, eggs and jam. Lunch is larger than dinner, though both meals typically feature meat products. This meal structure, with consumption concentrated in the morning and lunchtime, is believed to be beneficial to metabolic function.

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TYPICAL FOODS

Meat and potatoes are staple foods of the typical German diet, with meat often being eaten at every meal of the day. Sausage-type processed meats are particularly common and popular in Germany. Bread, pastries and cakes are often eaten, with butter and lard the most commonly used cooking fats. The national alcoholic beverage is beer, although Germany also has a domestic wine industry. Alcohol and tobacco consumption is relatively high in Germany compared to other European countries.

BENEFITS

The meat-heavy diet provides plenty of protein for the average German. Eating meat and dairy products at most meals means you have enough protein to maintain, heal and grow the tissues and muscles of your body. Popular pickled and fermented foods in the German diet -- sauerkraut is one such example -- provide vegetable sources during the cold winter months. It is believed that German consumption of fermented foods and sour cream helps the digestion of this generally low-fiber diet.

RISKS

The typical German diet is pretty high in fat -- including saturated fat -- as well as refined sugars and carbohydrates. Typically the diet is deficient in vegetable, fruit and dietary fiber. High dietary fat is likely to increase your blood cholesterol levels, placing you at greater risk for heart problems and stroke. High intake of sugars and carbohydrates increases the risk of obesity and associated health problems. It has been noted that in the previously underdeveloped East Germany, the typical diet is more natural and healthy than in the industrialized West.

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